



Re: Reclaiming Education in the Squamish Nation

To the Squamish People,

On behalf of the Squamish Nation Council, you are invited to vote in the upcoming referendum happening from December 1 to 30, 2022 on *Reclaiming Education in the Squamish Nation*. The Referendum question on the ballot will be:

“Do you approve of the Squamish Nation entering into the Education Jurisdiction Agreement and adopting the Protocol?”

Yes or No.

Background

The Squamish Nation Council raises our hands and gives thanks to all who came before us and whose knowledge has steered us toward this important moment in time – when we can take back control of the education of our méñmen (children).

The Squamish Nation Council set a goal in 2022 to “*Connect Skw̓wú7mesh Stélmexw to our values, history, language, culture, and ways of knowing*” by using our collective power to “*reclaim jurisdiction in child & family services, education, and rights & title.*” (Skw̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw 2026 Plan).

In 2021, Council asked the Squamish Nation to consider reclaiming control of education within our community. Since then, we have met five times with representatives from the S7ulh wa Nexwníwéyalh (Our Ways of Education) Committee. This Committee is responsible for doing the work around the vote and for sharing information with and collecting feedback from community members about their hopes, dreams, and concerns about reclaiming education. The Committee is following the rules of the Squamish Nation Election & Referendum Law throughout the process.

Have you made a plan to vote yet?

Your leadership asks you to make a plan to vote! Have you picked a date and time to come and vote yet? Is there anyone you could vote with?

Everything you need to know about the vote can be found in this package and on the website at squamish.net/reclaiming-education. Approval is at least 60% in favour of those who vote. This threshold is in alignment with the Squamish Nation Election and Referendum Law.

We thank you for taking the time to read this letter and considering why a 'yes' vote is a way to hold up, support and strengthen our present and future generations. We've included more information to help people understand this important issue.

Chen kw'enmantúmiwit (Thank you all).

On behalf of the Squamish Nation Council and Band Manager,



Chair Khelsilem
Squamish Nation Council

FAQ

Q: What is Education Jurisdiction?

A: Education Jurisdiction is about taking back control of the education of our ménmen (children), from preschool to grade 12. If we take back education jurisdiction, we can build an education system based on Skwxwú7mesh ways of being and Skwxwú7mesh ways of knowing.

Education Jurisdiction is about how we can hold each other up by instilling in our ménmen (children) – our current and future leaders – a strong sense of who they are as Skwxwú7mesh people.

If our community took back control of our education system, we could:

- Incorporate more Squamish language instruction & learning
- Include more land-based and tactile education learning strategies in our schools
- Control the process for certifying teachers, schools, and graduation
- Create curriculum and courses based on Skwxwú7mesh ways

In this way, our community would be able to hold ourselves accountable regarding the education of our ménmen (children) – not the federal government.

Q: What are we voting on?

A: The vote asks if we would like to make laws on our education systems in our own schools on-reserve. For example, the Province of British Columbia makes laws on education like the Education Act. If we vote yes on reclaiming education, it will give us the power to create a *Squamish Nation Law* on education.

The vote is to approve the two documents below. (Summaries are available in this package.):

- **Document 1** – The process for how our Education Law will be developed and approved (also known as the Education Law-Making Protocol); and,
- **Document 2** – An education agreement between Canada and Squamish Nation (also known as the Canada-First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement, CFNEJA).

The question on the ballot will be, “Do you approve of the Squamish Nation entering into the Education Jurisdiction Agreement and adopting the Protocol? Yes or No.”

Q: Why should I vote?

A: Decisions are made by the people who show up.

Our Squamish People have always placed a significant value on education. We can see this in our history and culture through words like snexwiyalh (teachings/advice), nexwníw (have a good upbringing), nexwníwiyalh (to teach or give advice), or usáylh (to teach [verbally]).

You are being asked to vote to carry on the legacy of our ancestors that came before us.

Speaking of our Squamish ways, the late Andrew Paull (1892-1959) of the Squamish Nation in 1932 once said,

“It was the duty of the more responsible Indians to see that the history and traditions of our race were properly handed down to posterity. A knowledge of our history and legends was similar as an education is regarded among whitemen.” (Conversations with Khahtsahlano by Major Matthews, 1955)

Our people and leaders have worked to regain control of our education for generations. Our ancestors and many who came before us have spent generations getting us to this point. As illustrated in 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood published a landmark policy paper called *Indian Control over Indian Education*. This paper read:

“Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of Indian people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability.

We believe in education- ...as a preparation for total living ...as a means of free choice of where to live and work ...as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement.” (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973)

We are now asking our people if we can take the next step to take back control of the education of our ménmen (children).

We recognize that most people do not currently live on a Squamish Nation reserve. We ask you to think about the impact this could have on present and future generations of Squamish People. In the coming years, we will build thousands of homes to bring our people home. Within the next generation, we plan to house every Squamish people.

Q: What happens after the vote?

A: If our people vote yes, we can start working together to create a Squamish Nation law for education. This law will be made by our people, working with technical advisors, and influenced through community engagements to date and in the future.

Q: What is the timeline for this initiative?

A: Here is the current timeline:

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| 2021 | Squamish Nation Council directs staff to engage Squamish Nation community on reclaiming education. | |
| 2022 | Squamish People vote in a referendum on entering into the Education Jurisdiction Agreement and adopting the Protocol. | ← We're here. |
| 2023 | Squamish People and Squamish Nation staff work together to create draft Squamish Nation Education Laws. | |
| 2024 | Squamish People vote to approve the draft law. | |

Q: How has community feedback informed us on this journey to reclaim education?

A: Our community has guided this entire process.

Over the past six months, there have been more than thirty in-person and virtual gatherings with Elders, Youth, Community Members, and Staff. During these engagements, we have heard that our education should enable our students to be successful and walk in multiple worlds.

What we've heard is our people want an education system where:

- People are learning the Squamish language, culture, histories and traditions,
- We use land-based and tactile education learning strategies,
- We have world-class leading academic programs where our students are not limited, but free to pursue post-secondary or other education,
- We have a school system where students are encouraged to follow their gifts and their strengths, and,
- Our students and teachers are well-supported to achieve learning and wellness.

Q: Who do I contact if I have more questions?

A: Please contact us to ask any further questions. We would be happy to connect more.

Website: squamish.net/reclaiming-education

Email: reclaiming.education@squamish.net

